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THE ALDINE.

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TIRED MOTHERS.

A LITTLE elbow leans upon your knee,
Your tired knee, that has so much to bear;
A child's dear eyes are looking lovingly
From underneath a thatch of tangled hair.
Perhaps you do not heed the velvet touch
Of warm, moist fingers, folding yours so tight;—
You do not prize this blessing over-much,
You almost are too tired to pray to-night.

But it is blessedness! A year ago
I did not see it as I do to-day,—
We are so dull and thankless; and too slow
To catch the sunshine till it slips away.
And now it seems surpassing strange to me,
That, while I wore the badge of mother-hood,
I did not kiss more oft, and tenderly,
The little child that brought me only good.

And if, some night when you sit down to rest,
You miss this elbow from your tired knee;
This restless, curling head from off your breast,
This lisping tongue that chatters constantly;
If from your own the dimpled hands had slipped,
And ne'er would nestle in your palm again;
If the white feet into their grave had tripped,
I could not blame you for your heart-ache then!

I wonder so that mothers ever fret,
At little children clinging to their gown;
Or that the foot-prints, when the days are wet,
Are ever black enough to make them frown.
If I could find a little muddy boot,
Or cap, or jacket, on my chamber floor;
If I could kiss a rosy, restless foot,
And hear its patter in my home once more:

If I could mend a broken cart to-day,
To-morrow make a kite, to reach the sky—
There is no woman in God's world could say
She was more blissfully content than I.
But ah! the dainty pillow next my own
Is never rumpled by a shining head;—
My singing birdling from its nest is flown;
The little boy I used to kiss is dead!

—Mrs. Albert Smith.

A SEPTEMBER REVERIE.

THE days which give us most pleasure are not those which are set down as gala days in the Calendar, but either those which precede, or those which follow them. They cluster together—these with the promise of happy days to come, and those with the memory of happy days departed. We know not how it may be with others, but we expect them when winter and summer are over. We look for them in April, after the last rains have gone, and the first buds have come—an early twilight time, with twinkling dew in the grass, and a silvery light in the kindling sky. And we look for them in September, and find them then, as we find the evening twilight, which is their fittest emblem. We have endured the heat and burden of the summer days. They were intolerable while here, but now that they are gone we are willing to remember them pleasantly. We recall the happiest, which, in view of the past summer, is but another way of saying we recall the *coolest*, and live over our woodland rambles, and our thoughtful watches by the sea. We have only to give ourselves up to reverie, and the summer will return. It has returned. A moment ago we sat at our table, pen in hand, beating our brains for an idea, and now we are at the seaside.

We are in a primitive little town on the sea-coast of Massachusetts. Twenty years ago it was bustling with life, but to-day it is dead. Where once great ships were built the grass grows, and the wharves are slowly crumbling. Year in and year out the insidious sea has eaten into the land, and the shingle is rolled further up the beach. The houses are old and weather-beaten, but there is a look of thrift about them, and their dwellers, who for the most part have no visible means of support, they appear to be rich enough to have two ministers, at least a portion of the year, and they talk of having a High School at no distant date. It is not of these worthy people that we think now, however they may flit before our mental vision, but of ourselves. We are sitting on the end of a long wharf, watching the

waves. It is not exactly the Sea which we behold, for there are islands in the offing, but it is as much of the Sea as we care to have perpetually before our eyes. The movement of the Sea is there, and its infinite changes: its desolation is wanting. We are never weary of it: we never can be weary of it. We have sat year after year where we sit now, and an inexhaustible sense of pleasure has poured in upon our souls. We are not glad, we are not sad; we are calm, and grave, and strong. All that was false about us has vanished. The wind has wafted away our worsen part like a mist: the waves have swept it afar in their endless chase.

What are we thinking of? We never know what we are thinking of when we look upon the sea. Our thoughts are too vague, too vast, to be apprehended. They are elemental. The poets have attempted to interpret them for us, but they have not succeeded. Byron has come the nearest to grasping the secret, but it has evaded him. Shelley has caught the feeling of the sea, or as much of it as haunts the Bay of Naples, and has fixed it for ever in his brilliant but mournful lines:

"I see the Deep's untrampled floor
With green and purple sea-weeds strown;
I see the waves upon the shore,
Like light dissolved in star-showers, thrown;
I sit upon the sands alone,
The lightning of the noontide ocean
Is flashing round me, and a tone
Arises from its measured motion,
How sweet! did any heart now share in my emotion."

The song is too sad for us, and our little landlocked bay. We prefer the breezy lyric of Whittier on Hampton Beach:

"Good-bye to Pain and Care! I take
Mine ease to-day;
Here, where these sunny waters break,
And ripples this keen breeze, I shake
All burdens from the heart, all weary thoughts away.

I draw a freer breath—I seem
Like all I see—
Waves in the sun—the white-winged gleam
Of sea-birds in the slanting beam—
And far-off sails which flit before the south wind free."

We have sat by the sea a thousand times, but never with the serious joy that we feel now. When we saw it last, in the body, it was July, and its waves burned like fire: to-day it is what we would have it—cool and clear. If a storm ever broke upon it, no trace of it remains: it is as placid as a mirror. It can no more be ruffled than the feeling with which we regard it, and which, if it was ever disturbed, has long since learned forgetfulness.

"Grief is for the sea of men,
By God's ocean it must weep."

BISHOP'S OAK.

CAN the tree which spreads its branches wide above you, or the sweet fern leaf at your feet, so intimately enter into your affairs as to play an important part in your destiny, even after the manner of an intelligent and responsible agent? There certainly are agents whom we do not scruple to call so, who perform their part with quite as little betrayal of sympathy.

Here was Bishop's Oak, which had been growing forty years, and had had nothing to do, but hold itself up in a dignified manner, embrace its opportunities and find the earth and the heavens on its side—which is all human nature has to do, we are told, and half believe—when two young men, approaching Bishop's Tavern toward the close of a dreadful day in the summer drought, saw it, and exclaimed together. One of them became at once so excited that, in spite of the heat and his fatigue, he quickened his pace, and finally set off on a run. The other followed more slowly. For a moment or two it was even doubtful to himself whether he would follow at all; for, suddenly, he had discovered that they were within a stone's throw of the Deer's Head Inn, from which he had departed alone by night, fifteen years before, as a bond-child escaping from a hateful bondage. Under that very tree he had stood and told little Delph not to cry, crying himself meanwhile; and though he had told her then that he would come again, in the years that had followed he had made himself quite another promise. With the old life he had buried the old purpose. And, yet, here he was!

All at once he now said to himself, "I'm here, and

I'll go on—but they'll never know me, and they never *shall* know me, if they are alive. Old Bishop, though, must have come to the end of his rope before this." And so deciding, he went on to join his companion.

"Do you see that knee up there?" the young fellow shouted, as they stood together beneath the oak. "How splendidly that great branch fits into the trunk! What a curve the builders can get from it."

"The tree is a landmark," answered the other, with considerably less enthusiasm.

"That is clear enough. We'll have it though."

"I don't know. I lived in this region once; but mum's the word! Call me Tiffany, and see if any body recognizes me; if I thought there was any danger, I would back out of this job. There isn't any one here I want to see, if the same folk are around that used to keep the tavern."

Young Lewis looked at his companion altogether amazed. After a moment he laughed, and said, "Mum's the word. We'll carry the tree off between us as a souvenir."

"Not a leaf of it! I should feel," said young Mr. Tiffany, looking up into the glorious green above him, "as if I had committed a murder. Do you think a tree has no feeling?"

"You sentimental humbug! What an eye to business you have, to be sure!"

"Let us order our supper," said the sentimentalist "I'm as hungry as a bear."

The landlord of the Deer's Head Inn was standing on the steps of the two-story white frame building, which was the pride of his life, and the like of which you may see fifty times repeated in your country rambles on a summer's day, when the young men came in sight.

"A couple of swells," he said to himself, with a decision that showed no sense of difficulty in deciding upon men.

He meant, perhaps, that they were uncommonly well-dressed youths, such as are accustomed to find satisfaction in the looking-glass. Any mother on the face of the wide earth might, in fact, have felt proud to own young Lewis as her son. Such a figure and bearing, and such health, one would not see repeated often in a regiment of men. Tiffany, two or three inches shorter, had been dealt with less kindly by nature in every external particular, yet, considered apart by himself, his dark countenance and bright eyes would have presented their attractions.

The round and red-faced innkeeper, gray-haired, slow-moving, good-natured, as usual, stood on the topmost step of the flight leading to his door, ready to welcome the strangers, and as there were no horses to put out he had only to step into the hall, shout "Delphy," and order "supper for two."

The young stranger, who had been a child fifteen years ago, and had then found in this old man an object of terror, needed now no further information than was given him by his own wary senses.

Having brought his eyes to bear with bleared discrimination upon the new comers, Bishop speedily discovered that the slender, swift-moving, dark-browed Tiffany was the man of the two, and that the other "swell" would be a good fellow to talk and smoke with that evening, so he paid court to both.

The supper-bell soon sounding, the young men found themselves forthwith seated at one end of the tavern-table, and waited on by the innkeeper's daughter, a girl whom apparently no amount of work could throw off her balance. That the burden of the "Public" had not been borne by her good-for-nothing father was perfectly manifest; had much serving given to those blue eyes their thoughtful, wistful look, and to her features the expression of anxious foreboding which appeared to be permanently fixed in them?

The travelers addressed themselves to the dishes before them with an earnestness which showed their purpose to make an end of them. They seemed hardly to see the girl who waited on them, until just as the innkeeper entered the room and sat down near the table—then Tiffany appeared to notice that she was a very pretty girl, and to wonder whether she could be aware of the fact.

The inn keeper had evidently dropped in to continue the conversation begun in his bar-room before the call to supper, for he said, as he sat down,

"I've had offers before for that old fellow; but I never had the mind, yet, to let him go."

"You'll think better of it this time, I'm sure," said Lewis, helping himself with liberal hand from two or three dishes in swift succession.